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UNCLAS HARARE 001788

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PD, AF/S (SCHLACHTER), AF/RA

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TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KPAO](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REPORT FOOD AID IN ZIMBABWE; HARARE

11. Under headline "Food aid prolongs nation's suffering" the independent weekly "The Financial Gazette" uses its August 1 editorial to castigate the government of Zimbabwe for causing the current food crisis and question the utility of Western food donations. Excerpts:
12. "Zimbabweans, many of whom are threatened with starvation are undoubtedly grateful for the food aid that is being given to them by several foreign governments. Unfortunately, the reality is that aid is perpetuating and prolonging the wider suffering of Zimbabweans by giving them a false sense of food security when they should be seriously confronting the causes of their starvation in a rich farming land. As long as the food handouts continue to come in, many in Zimbabwe and especially the government will not bother to examine why the country has sunk to this pathetic level, let alone to take corrective action. . .For Zimbabweans, the food aid gives them false comfort that all is well, shielding them from the harsh reality that they must take their destiny into their hands in the face of an administration that seems determined to do everything and anything that can make their lives as unbearable as is possible.

" . . .But the issue of food aid, aside from promoting an unsustainable culture of dependency, goes far deeper than this in crisis-weary Zimbabwe. Plausible media reports continue to filter out from the countryside that some elements of the ruling ZANU PF party. . .are now using food aid as a political weapon. These elements are denying food aid to those they suspect to be opposition members, clearly one of the worst human rights abuses and a serious challenge to the conscience of those foreign governments whose taxpayers' money has been used to buy the food. . .Surely the government, however much it may hate the fact that the MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) is a reality, must take care of the interests of all Zimbabweans and not just those of its supporters. The food aid. . .must be given to all who need it without any discrimination whatsoever. Otherwise Zimbabweans will feel justified in refusing to pay taxes from which the food aid money is siphoned if the food is only meant for ZANU PF members. There can be no two ways about this."

SULLIVAN